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First Committee

3rd Meeting
Monday, 13 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: In accordance with the adopted programme of work, today the Committee will begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. Permit me first, however, to make a statement as presiding officer of this body.

I had occasion during an earlier meeting of the Committee to extend a warm welcome to all representatives participating in the work of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly. I also had occasion to thank them most sincerely for the great honour they have bestowed upon me and my country in electing me Chairman of this important Committee. I can only reiterate these sentiments at this juncture and express the hope that I can count on the goodwill and cooperation of all delegations and members of the Bureau, when they have been elected, in carrying out the multifaceted responsibilities of the Chairman of this Committee.

We have a duty to perform within a given time-frame. I urge all representatives to honour that time limit. We should endeavour to be punctual, to keep statements as close as possible to the 15-minute time limit, to avoid polemics and to reach early agreement on all draft resolutions. I will be meeting with the Chairmen of the regional groups and other important actors in this regard.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly has begun its work in a favourable international climate. The main features of international security changed radically during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when our understanding of international security underwent unrelenting alterations and adjustments. Unprecedented as these changes were in pace and volume and in systemic and conceptual shifts, they have slowed down somewhat over the last two years, and the whole system of international security is showing welcome signs of stabilization.

There are a number of valuable conclusions to be drawn from this fact, concerning in particular the theoretical underpinnings of disarmament and its practical implementation. Let me briefly touch upon some of them.

First and foremost, the international climate is quite propitious for the implementation of concluded disarmament agreements as well as for new disarmament undertakings aimed at the finalization of the new security concepts and structures which emerged in the first half of the 1990s and which will be dominant for the remainder of the millennium and beyond.

The second conclusion is that the comprehensive nature of security in the modern world requires flexibility and a multifaceted approach to the question of disarmament. Such an approach could be general or specific; global or regional; unilateral, bilateral or multilateral; separate or interconnected; step-by-step or all-encompassing, depending on the circumstances.

Thirdly, the achievements of the international community in the field of disarmament in general, and nuclear disarmament in particular, have been impressive during the past few years. A lot, however, remains to be done. It is clear that nuclear weapons will remain for the

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foreseeable future an important feature of the military posture of nuclear-weapon States. It could therefore be reasonably expected that a debate on the role of nuclear weapons will continue unabated, especially on the step-by-step approach, security assurances and cut-off, to mention but a few of these areas.

This session follows several noteworthy developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation which were met with overwhelming approval. The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the welcome and commendable outcome of a more than 40-year effort by the international community aimed at preventing vertical proliferation and qualitative improvements of nuclear weapons. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) paved the way for other initiatives and in particular gave a strong impulse to the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world. The successful conclusion of the Pelindaba Treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa last year was a long-overdue step towards the total denuclearization of the African Continent.

The new agreements between the United States, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan within the framework of the START II Treaty and the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the START III and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaties introduced a healthy dose of realism into the adjusted time-table for the destruction of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery. We hope that this new schedule will be strictly adhered to.

While welcoming these developments, the international community has simultaneously focused on a number of other global and regional measures aimed at averting or reducing the risk of nuclear war and its devastating consequences. Among these the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones has attained considerable prominence. The treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, as well as proposals for nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and a single-State nuclear-weapon-free-zone concept are material witnesses to the growing worldwide support for such zones. They are increasingly viewed as an important contribution to an overall international climate in which the attainment of general and complete disarmament becomes more feasible.

There is little argument over the fact that, based on transparency and the free exchange of information, nuclear-weapon-free zones foster greater understanding between neighbouring States, encourage cooperation among them and thus strengthen international peace and security and regional stability. It is worth noting that the first working group ever to be created within the Disarmament Commission on this issue has launched successful discussions based exactly on the above premises.

It is regrettable that the outcome of the consideration of other key issues within another international negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament, has not been equally successful. Divergence of views has impeded progress in such vital areas as time-bound nuclear disarmament, outer space, a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, the cut-off of the production of fissile materials, security assurances and so on. Although it had been hoped that the Conference on Disarmament would have been able to find solutions to these problems, regrettably that body could not agree on negotiating mandates regarding these issues.

It is against the background of this temporary setback that the international community has more reason to celebrate the progress achieved with regard to other weapons of mass destruction, namely the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction — the Chemical Weapons Convention — on 29 April this year and the ongoing effort to enhance the compliance provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction — the Biological Weapons Convention. There is little argument that the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons and the destruction of stockpiles of those weapons have positively influenced ongoing discussions on a range of nuclear issues, and will continue to do so.

I hope that I am speaking on behalf of all delegations when I single out the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a highlight of this year's disarmament calendar. To date, more than 100 countries have become States parties to the Convention and 165 have signed it. I wholeheartedly endorse the remarks of the Secretary-General, who has noted that we are privileged witnesses to a remarkable era of peacemaking, of which the Chemical Weapons Convention represents a landmark agreement. And it is the imperative of our time to strive towards universal adherence to that Convention.

The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention has provided the international community with a unique means

to eradicate one of the three existing types of weapons of mass destruction. Over the years, the Convention has proved to be a powerful international legal instrument, averting a potentially dangerous arms race in this new area. However, the Convention does not have specific verification provisions. While this deficiency was not a determining factor during the cold war, a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention has become a necessity in the light of the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with their elaborate verification mechanisms. I hope that the ad hoc group in Geneva will soon move to a negotiating format and conclude the process by finalizing the verification protocol and setting up relevant mechanisms for this important Convention.

One of the persistent concerns expressed by an overwhelming majority of delegations on conventional weapons is the problem of mines. This comes as no surprise considering the track record of these weapons, and the terror and havoc they cause to civilian populations. A number of developments have taken place aimed at building the political support of the international community for reaching a total ban on anti-personnel mines. An international strategy conference held in October 1996 launched the Ottawa process, which concluded with a treaty in Oslo on 18 September, with more than 100 countries agreeing to submit for formal signing such a treaty outlawing anti-personnel mines. I welcome this development. It is a step in the right direction from the military, political and moral points of view. I sincerely hope that the Treaty will eventually become universal.

The end of the cold war has given rise to intra-State, ethnic and religious conflicts which are fought with readily available and easy-to-use small arms. These weapons are not the primary reason for these wars, but they contribute in no small measure to the escalation of a conflict from zero belligerence to the hottest forms of armed violence. The United Nations has as a result shown keen interest in this issue. I would like to comment on two developments in this regard: the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and the beginning of deliberations in the Disarmament Commission on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on questions of small arms. Let me, on behalf of the First Committee, commend the experts on an excellent and thorough study. As to the discussions within the Disarmament Commission, it should be noted that after a three-year consideration of illicit transfers of arms, it was more than logical for member States to take up the issue of small arms, since these weapons are most likely to be illicitly traded and to wind up in the hands of irregular troops operating with total disregard for international or humanitarian law. It is my belief that the final report of the Disarmament Commission on this issue will build on and add to the findings of the experts.

Five years ago, the United Nations embarked on a new endeavour in the area of transparency and confidence-building measures: the first international arms-transfer register was established, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. At that time, the critics suggested that the undertaking was not daring enough or did not go far enough in its innovative approaches. Its supporters, on the other hand, rightly pointed out that the proposed mechanism was only the first step and would be followed ultimately by other, bolder measures. Time has proved the supporters correct. The Register has grown into a potent confidence-building tool. Three expert groups since 1992 have introduced necessary changes and adjustments to make the Register consonant with the changing world. In this connection, I wish to draw attention to the latest report of the group of governmental experts. We have taken note of the recommendation contained in the report to make public the information on military holdings and procurement through national production, which previously was supplied on a voluntary basis as a part of background information. Despite the participation of 90 countries in the Register, it should be noted that universality is the ultimate goal. Also, the reporting countries are not evenly distributed among the regions, with some regions having a high concentration of reporting States and others having none.

One of the encouraging developments this year was the successful session of the Disarmament Commission. After two years of shortened substantive sessions, the Commission has returned to a three-week format. This showed positive results. Despite the fact that two of three agenda items were in the initial stages of discussions, the working groups on those two items have laid a solid foundation for their future work, and the interim documents compiled on subject issues reveal a serious intention on the part of delegations to elaborate comprehensive and practical recommendations. We believe that the Commission will continue to play an important role in the field of arms limitation and disarmament.

With regard to the subjects under consideration at the Disarmament Commission, I would like to single out the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which has been on the agenda of this body for the last two years. In spite of the fact that

there was a general understanding concerning the need to convene such a session, the Commission was unable to reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda for the session. I will not elaborate on different views of countries, since they are well known to all those present. What I would like to point out is the expectation that the current session will once again devote efforts to the question of convening the special session. I think that intensive consultations should lead to a draft resolution which will be conducive to the convening of the session and will result in an agreement to begin the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament.

Before concluding, let me briefly touch upon the item on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee and in this context comment on our organization of work, the agenda of the First Committee and the proposed programme of work. As representatives are aware, this issue has been dealt with by the First Committee since 1984. The consideration of the item has taken place as part and parcel of the exercise aimed at enhancing the overall effectiveness of the United Nations and its main bodies, as well as the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Like my predecessors, I intend to concentrate our discussions on two areas for the reform covering substantive and procedural aspects of the issue. I expect that all delegations will demonstrate their innovative thinking and new approaches, which may drastically depart from the old train of thought, as it has blocked progress for so long. We could move forward in many different ways, but we should definitely start by formulating an international disarmament agenda in such a way that it is focused on attainable goals. This agenda should be practical, action-oriented and concentrated on key, updated issues.

We have a full load and an important task ahead of us. I hope that the general debate will be intellectually rewarding, morally fulfilling and practically applicable. In conducting this kind of work, I will count on the support of all delegations. For my part, I can pledge my best effort to make our common endeavour a successful one.

Agenda items 62 to 82

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. de Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to extend to you, Sir, the congratulations of my delegation on your election to guide the work of the First Committee. Your experience and personal qualities augur well for good results. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and support in this important task.

Since the end of the bipolar confrontation, significant progress in arms control and reduction has undoubtedly taken place. Taking into account only what has taken place this year, we can highlight the establishment of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization as the starting point of the complex verification system provided for in the Treaty, a crucial component of the credibility of this legal instrument. We hope that the ratification process will not be hindered by the continuation of nuclear tests, which give rise to doubts as to the commitment of States to an end to the qualitative proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Also in 1997, the Paris Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons entered into force and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons started its operations. During the last few months we have witnessed an avalanche of ratifications to the Convention, which as of 22 September already had 100 States Parties. We again call on the Russian Federation — a country which has declared that it possesses chemical weapons — to ratify this treaty as soon as possible.

In the context of the negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation, the Helsinki presidential summit led to the signing of the first agreements. The Protocol to the START II Treaty increases the possibility that the agreed reductions will take place and that START III negotiations will begin. The adjustments incorporated in the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty will serve to maintain the effectiveness of an essential instrument for the control of the arms race.

Nevertheless, these achievements cannot hide the exasperating lack of consensus on the part of the international community on security and disarmament priorities and on the objectives to be pursued not only now, but also in the first decades of the next century. This lack of consensus permeates the main multilateral deliberative forums and the sole negotiating body. We have therefore not been able to reach agreement on the objectives and agenda for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Persistent differences on nuclear disarmament make it impossible to agree on an agenda that would take into consideration the legitimate security concerns of all.

The elimination of nuclear weapons remains our priority, as agreed in the 1978 Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, until we achieve consensus on disarmament and security principles and objectives for the post-cold-war era. However, this is not merely a priority. The International Court of Justice has already stated that there is an obligation on all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

To comply with this imperative obligation, Mexico and 25 other countries submitted a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to the Conference on Disarmament last June, as a follow-up to the programme of work submitted by the Group of 21, in which it called, as it has done persistently, for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This initiative proposes that the Conference on Disarmament negotiate a multilateral instrument committing all States to the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; an agreement on the steps required in a phased programme with deadlines leading to their total elimination; and a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. We think that such a mandate would take into account the concerns of all States and certainly would not create any linkage or preference — which my delegation has always rejected — with regard to opening negotiations on one type of instrument or another.

It should be noted that support for the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament is not limited to the Group of 21. However, time seems to have stood still in the Conference on this issue. Attitudes which might have been understandable in times of confrontation still exist and impede any flexibility. Unable to devote itself to its priorities, the Conference wavers between stagnation and irrelevance.

The 1995 decision on the strengthening of the review mechanism of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been put to the test for the first time this year. According to that decision, the Preparatory Committee shall consider principles, objectives and means to promote the full application of the Treaty and its universality, and make recommendations thereon to the Review Conference. We welcome this exercise, which undoubtedly is less procedural than all previous preparatory processes of NPT Review Conferences.

In this spirit Mexico participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee, held in April this year. We regret, however, that at this early stage in our deliberations narrow-minded attitudes have already emerged, which are contrary to the spirit of dialogue that in 1995 allowed for the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the adoption of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We will work to ensure that the second session of the Preparatory Committee is a genuine follow-up to the discussions that took place here in New York and that the proposals that are on the table will not be disregarded as if each session of the Preparatory Committee were unrelated to the previous one.

In Mexico, on 14 February 1997 we solemnly celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and noted that the denuclearization regime for Latin America and the Caribbean is practically completed, thus strengthening peace and regional stability. My delegation will submit, as is its custom, a draft resolution on the consolidation of the regime established by our Treaty.

We welcome the decision of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to set up a new regime of denuclearization in Central Asia modelled on existing treaties. Mexico participated as a special guest in the Tashkent conference, and we naturally wish to state our full readiness to use our experience to help in the establishment of a new zone from which nuclear weapons are banished.

We are convinced that experience acquired in regions where a denuclearization regime exists stimulates the creation of new zones and mechanisms of cooperation among the various treaty bodies. Much can be learned from the experience of these bodies, some of which carry out duties that were not provided for in the early treaties of this kind. A useful exchange of views among such bodies may result, filling gaps or addressing shortcomings in the various legal instruments. This is, in our view, the value of the exercise undertaken last year at the initiative of Brazil, which culminated in resolution 51/45 B, on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will continue to be a threat to the very survival of humankind. Today, not only is there no justification for nuclear weapons, but concerns relating to their mistaken, accidental or unauthorized use have increased. No other issue deserves

higher priority than that of their elimination. The international community is aware of this, and an increasing number of voices, even within nuclear-weapon States, are demanding that we return to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

No one expects this task to be easily or swiftly accomplished. We need first an unequivocal commitment by all States to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and in particular from the nuclear-weapon States. A programme with clearly defined steps for the adoption of the necessary unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures is also required.

There is no lack of material or ideas on the subject. The proposal for a programme of action submitted last year by 28 delegations belonging to the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, the Canberra Commission report and the model convention for the elimination of nuclear weapons presented by the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy provide some good examples. Indeed, nobody expects that measures that must be the result of understandings reached bilaterally or within a small group of States should be negotiated multilaterally. But it is equally unacceptable for nuclear disarmament to be left exclusively to nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, refusing to deal with nuclear disarmament in any of the existing multilateral forums will not make the issue disappear.

It is the responsibility of all to respond to the universal demands for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Those of us who are committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament will in the end find a way to overcome the paralysis imposed on us. Mexico will initiate consultations to that end and will explore the possibility of reconvening, in accordance with present circumstances, the Conference of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, which took place in 1968.

At this session of the General Assembly the delegation of Mexico will continue to support draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament, on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, and on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

One of the paradoxes of this era of détente is the excessive availability, stockpiling and transfer of conventional weapons. Mexico is convinced that States that produce and supply conventional weapons, together with States that receive them, share a common responsibility to ensure that the volume and level of sophistication of such weapons do not exceed legitimate defence needs, promote regional instability or arm races, exacerbate, intensify or prolong conflicts, or become the object of illicit trafficking.

Disarmament and conventional arms control have a greater chance of success at the regional level. Mexico would therefore welcome a reduction in the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons and has co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions requesting the Conference on Disarmament to formulate principles that could serve as a framework for the negotiation of regional agreements on conventional-arms control.

Within our region, Mexico has taken initiatives in this area and we earnestly hope that we will achieve rapid progress. We hope to conclude this very week negotiations on a draft inter-American convention against the production and illicit trafficking of firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials, as an important means of combating the illicit transfer and use of conventional weapons, which cause such serious problems because of their links to drug trafficking, terrorism and the increasing danger posed by common and organized crime. We will report on our achievements to the General Assembly in compliance with resolution 51/45 F of last year.

The Government of Mexico is deeply satisfied with the adoption in Oslo of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. A set of norms has been established to remedy the tragedy caused by the continuous placement of new anti-personnel mines, at a rate of two million each year, which cancels out the heroic and patient, but also modest, demining efforts. By not using, stockpiling, producing and transferring anti-personnel mines, we save the lives of thousands of innocent people exposed to the indiscriminate proliferation of those instruments of terror and untold suffering.

We are also committed to destroying existing anti-personnel mines, both those planted and those stockpiled, and progress has been made in promoting international cooperation for those who have fewer human and financial resources with which to deal with the problem.

We achieved the text of this treaty in less than a year through a negotiating process open to all States. The large number of participants from all regions, and the political will shown, gave the process an unequivocal seal of legitimacy.

The relative speed with which the negotiation process was completed was due, first, to the urgent need to respond to the humanitarian tragedy of anti-personnel mines; secondly, to the effective mobilization of civil society, in particular the International Campaign to Ban Landmines,

which was rightly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace this year; and thirdly, to the fact that we did not begin from scratch. In fact, it took us more than 20 years to reach a total ban on anti-personnel mines, and in the process we passed through significant and important stages in which humanitarian and military needs were duly addressed.

The exercise was begun by Mexico and other States in the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, in 1974, when — as Mr. Davinic, who joined me in this process, will recall — we proposed a ban on the use of scattered mines remotely delivered or launched from aircraft. On the initiative of that group of countries, to which Mexico belonged, the United Nations Conference on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects was held in 1979 and 1980, leading to the adoption of a Protocol on the restriction of the use of mines, booby traps and other devices.

In 1995, in the Vienna Review Conference of the 1980 Convention, Mexico was the first country to favour a total ban on anti-personnel mines. It was not possible then to reach that goal, but a new amended Protocol restricting the use of mines was adopted.

Those who are committed to the Ottawa process will submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution inviting all States to be parties to the Convention.

Mexico is convinced that it is necessary to strengthen the section of the Secretariat which services different disarmament bodies so as to deal with a growing and increasingly diverse need for substantive services.

Member States, particularly those that are not military Powers, receive indispensable material from the Secretariat that allows us to participate in the discussion of all disarmament issues. We regret the fact that, for the first time in many years, we began the deliberations of the First Committee without having last year's *Disarmament Yearbook*. This does not augur well for the strengthening of the Secretariat in the field of disarmament.

The Secretariat contributes to the implementation of policies determined by Member States. The United Nations institutional arrangements in this field reflect an agreed agenda and priorities. The existence of weapons of mass destruction, beginning with nuclear weapons, is the greatest threat facing humankind. When there is still so much to be done to stop and reverse the arms race in the field of weapons of mass destruction, the problem cannot be reduced to horizontal non-proliferation.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will certainly affect mandates, membership and methods of work of the sole negotiating body, as well as of the deliberative forums, but it will also have an effect on the Secretariat's role. Meanwhile, the 1978 Final Document, which is still valid, should guide us all in our endeavours.

Mr. Millim (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: Mr. Chairman, allow me first to congratulate you on behalf of the European Union on your election. We have every confidence that under your chairmanship our discussions will proceed smoothly. It goes without saying that your efforts and those of the Bureau have the full support of the Member States of the Union.

This statement is endorsed by the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated country, Cyprus.

In the context of its common foreign and security policy, the Union attaches particular importance to matters relating to the strengthening of international peace and security. This concern is reflected in the Union's considerable commitment on all the matters dealt with by the First Committee.

We have the good fortune to be experiencing a period of considerable progress in the international security environment. The divisions that have endangered our common security for decades have now been removed. The Union has fully committed itself to constructing a new architecture for European security, a process which is being conducted in an atmosphere marked by a new spirit of cooperation.

The European Union is convinced that the enlargement processes of both the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance will help to consolidate peace and stability without creating new divisions in Europe. The signing on 27 May 1997 in Paris of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation also marks the beginning of a new era in Euro-Atlantic security relations.

The Union is committed to the modernization of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is the cornerstone of Europe's security. It welcomes the decision of 23 July on certain fundamental elements regarding amendment of the Treaty. Member countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which are not parties to the Treaty will be informed of the progress of negotiations in the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, which continues to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of conventional arms control in Europe. Among other things, the Forum can play an important role in implementing the commitments on arms limitation and regional stabilization provided for in the peace agreement concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union is making an active contribution to the implementation of the peace agreements in the former Yugoslavia, with the aim of helping the countries concerned to advance towards democracy and the rule of law. The European Union believes that by pursuing these objectives it is contributing to the stabilization of that region. The impending completion, on 28 October, of the arms reduction programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been implemented with the assistance of certain member States of the European Union, gives cause for satisfaction and provides an example of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. In this context, the Union hopes that the utmost restraint will be exercised as regards the acquisition of armaments and other military equipment.

With regard to security in the Euro-Mediterranean area, I would point out that, in the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, the European Union and 12 countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean undertook to promote and strengthen the peace, stability and security of the area. These objectives were reaffirmed in the conclusions adopted by the Foreign Ministers at the second Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference, held in Malta in April 1997. In particular, concrete progress was made in the formulation of confidence-building and security-building measures. Moreover, in accordance with the Barcelona and Malta mandates, discussions between senior officials to finalize a peace and stability Charter are now taking place.

The Union reiterates its request that signatory States that have not yet ratified the "Open Skies" Treaty should do so as soon as possible.

In the context of the common European security policy, the Union attaches particular importance to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It believes that the progress made in these areas can make a substantial contribution to peace and the strengthening of international security. It has welcomed the significant progress made recently and reaffirms its intention of continuing actively to promote this process.

Among the notable events of the past year, I would like to mention the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the beginning of the reinforced process of reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the conclusion of work at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the strengthening of nuclear safeguards; and the international community's active search for an agreement on banning anti-personnel mines.

Unfortunately, despite these measures, the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons has still not been eliminated. The European Union calls for a continuing commitment on the part of the international community in the campaign against such risks, which threaten us all. For the Union, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. The European Union welcomes Brazil's declared intention of acceding to the NPT. The Union continues to appeal for worldwide accession to the Treaty and reiterates its call for those States that have not yet done so to accede to the NPT and conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The European Union welcomed the important decisions taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on the indefinite extension of the Treaty, the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the strengthening of the process for reviewing the Treaty. The European Union also welcomed the generally very constructive atmosphere of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the next NPT Review Conference, in the year 2000, and it is pleased at the results of that session. In the light of these results, the European Union is determined to continue the work on both substance and procedure at the second session of the Preparatory Committee and calls on all States to join it in this effort.

The Union also welcomes the adoption on 15 May this year by the competent authorities of the International Atomic Energy Agency of the Model Protocol that relates to Programme "93+2", part II, and is intended to enable undeclared nuclear activities to be detected. For its part,

the European Union is determined to conclude the additional protocols with the IAEA as soon as possible. To this end the relevant preparatory work has already begun within the Union. The European Union earnestly hopes that other States will also embark on negotiations with the IAEA to conclude additional protocols as soon as possible.

The adoption and opening for signature last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) made a tangible contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting the process of nuclear disarmament and strengthening international peace and security. The CTBT provides a strong impetus to implementation of the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. They identified the conclusion of the negotiations for a treaty as the first of the measures under the action programme that was drawn up to give full effect to the provisions of article VI of the NPT. The initial work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization has already enabled progress to be made in preparing for implementation of the Treaty. The continuation of this work will depend on whether the future Organization is set up within the time limits and in the form specified by the Treaty, and this, for the European Union, makes it particularly important that all States accede to the CTBT. The European Union welcomes the fact that 147 countries have signed the Treaty and that seven of them have ratified it. It calls on all States that have not yet signed the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

Following the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations, the international community should now concentrate its efforts on the second measure under the action programme for implementing article VI of the NPT, contained in the decision on principles and objectives. This involves the immediate opening and rapid conclusion of negotiations for a universal, non-discriminatory convention banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices. The Union reiterates its hope, expressed many times before, that, in accordance with the declaration made by the Special Coordinator of the Conference on Disarmament and its mandate, the Conference on Disarmament will set up as soon as possible an ad hoc committee to conduct these negotiations. The Union finds it regrettable and disappointing that, this year again, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to open negotiations on a cut-off treaty, despite the fact that in 1995, the Conference on Disarmament agreed to set up an ad hoc committee.

The Union also continues to attach great importance to the third and last measure of the action programme contained in the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, namely, the determined pursuit by nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons and to the desire of all States to work for general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Union welcomes the progress achieved in this area. The entry into force of the START Treaty was a major milestone in this process, as were the major reductions in their nuclear arsenals made unilaterally by the two parties to that agreement and by other nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France. The Union hopes that another important step forward will soon be made with the ratification of the START II Treaty by Russia, and that the way will thus be open for negotiations to begin on START III.

With regard to the risks of nuclear proliferation, certain regions have aroused particular concern in the last few years. In response to these specific concerns, the European Union has attached particular importance to the non-proliferation objectives of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). After deciding to provide initial assistance in the form of a contribution of ECU 5 million to KEDO in March 1996, the Union has sought ways of supporting it in a more substantial and lasting manner. Accordingly, negotiations with the founding members of KEDO began in October 1996. They led to the conclusion of an agreement that provides for an annual contribution by the Union of up to ECU 15 million for a period of five years and opens the way for European Union participation in the KEDO Executive Board.

In this way the Union will be able to play an active part in this important initiative aimed at strengthening stability and security in that region. In this context, the Union reiterates that it attaches particular importance to respect by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its international commitments under its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In Iraq, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), charged with the disarming of that country, has since 1991 been performing its difficult and important task of identifying and eliminating Iraq's capacity in terms of weapons of mass destruction. The European Union applauds the efforts of the Special Commission and reaffirms its support. We should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work done by the outgoing

Chairman of UNSCOM and to assure his successor of our full support. We are certain he will carry on this important task with the same diligence as his predecessor. The European Union calls for Iraq to cooperate fully with UNSCOM so that the relevant Security Council resolutions can be implemented in their entirety. It considers any obstruction to the work of the inspectors to be contrary to those resolutions.

In the Union's view, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely concluded between States in a given region, strengthens global and regional peace and stability. The Union welcomes the establishment of new zones by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Rarotonga, as well as the current efforts to make the zone established by the Treaty of Bangkok fully effective. This year the Union has again indicated its interest in the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. Similarly, the Union continues to support efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. The Union notes that all the countries in the region but one are at present parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It would refer to the resolution of the 1995 NPT Conference requiring all Middle East States that had not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the NPT as soon as possible and to make progress towards the creation of such a zone.

In the field of non-nuclear weapons, the Union warmly welcomed the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). This Convention, the first multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreement to prohibit a whole category of weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable manner, is a landmark in the disarmament process. All the member States of the Union were among the first States parties to the Convention and attended the First Conference of States Parties at The Hague last May. That Conference took measures to agree on the institutional and organizational structures that are needed if all the tasks assigned by the Conference are to be carried out successfully. In this context, the Union calls on all States parties to the Convention to fulfil all their obligations under it, in particular as regards the submission of full declarations. The Union attaches great importance to the Convention's being universal and to its effective implementation. It therefore requests all States that have not yet done so, especially those with large chemical industries and those in areas of tension, to sign and/or ratify this Convention.

In particular, the Union considers the early ratification of the CWC by the Russian Federation, which holds very large stocks of chemical weapons, to be of fundamental importance if the Convention is to be effective. The European Union is well aware of the consequences that ratification of the CWC will have for the Russian Federation. As regards the financial impact, the Union is willing to provide assistance in areas relating to the destruction of stocks of declared chemical weapons as soon as Russia has ratified the Convention. We wish to note that such assistance is in addition to the bilateral initiatives that several member States of the Union have already taken to support the Russian Federation in this area.

The European Union would like to reaffirm the importance it attaches to strengthening the effective implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), in particular through the adoption by States parties to the Convention of an effective verification system. It welcomed the decision taken at the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention last December to step up the work of the ad hoc group charged with drawing up a verification protocol to the Convention. In this context, the Union urges the ad hoc group to step up its work significantly over the next year; the work programme for next year, which at present provides for 11 weeks of meetings, should be strengthened. The European Union also welcomes the progress made since then by the ad hoc group, and especially the transition to negotiations based on an evolving text. The Union firmly intends to continue to play an active and constructive role in the ad hoc group's proceedings. It calls on all the other participants to do the same so that the negotiations can result in the adoption of a legally binding protocol as soon as possible. The European Union is determined to redouble its efforts to attain the objective of concluding these negotiations in 1998. Biological weapons pose a very particular threat because of the ease with which they can be manufactured. It is therefore all the more important for an effective verification mechanism to be put in place.

The network of international conventions seeking to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is backed up by the indispensable instrument of export controls. Several incidents in the recent past have underlined the importance of the various systems of export control in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, there is still a risk of certain goods and technologies being used illicitly. Any exporting State must therefore take measures to ensure that its exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to an appropriate system of surveillance and

control. Export controls have no purpose other than to prevent the irresponsible spread of materials, equipment and technologies that might be used in breach of the aims of non-proliferation. Far from being a bureaucratic obstacle to international trade and cooperation, controls of this kind are a precondition for such cooperation. These controls make it easier for the countries concerned to pursue technological development on a joint basis.

In this context, the exporting States need to explain the value of export controls and to demonstrate clearly that, far from obstructing trade for peaceful purposes, they actually make it possible for such trade to take place. An open dialogue should ensure that the relevant principles and practices are understood, and thereby facilitate cooperation.

The Union would emphasize the scale of the contribution made by the non-proliferation and export-control systems to the international community's concerted action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. The joint approach by the Australia Group plays a central role in the fight against the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. Another vital contribution is that made by the directives of the Missile Technology Control Regime on preventing the proliferation of the means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. The Nuclear Suppliers Group plays a key role in formulating directives on the export of nuclear or dual-use materials, equipment and technologies in the context of the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The measures agreed under the Wassenaar Arrangement provide yet another very useful element. Through their dialogue with non-member countries, all these arrangements have demonstrated the desire to pursue important initiatives in the matter of transparency. The European Union applauds these efforts, which it fully supports. I would note in passing that the Union gave practical expression to its commitment to the promotion of transparency in nuclear-export controls last week at the seminar held by the Nuclear Suppliers Group at Vienna. The Union calls on all States to adopt responsible policies concerning transfers of sensitive materials, including the introduction of effective systems of export control.

Persuaded as it is of the importance of transparency with regard to armaments as a factor for establishing a climate of trust between States, the Union considers that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a very important instrument, the value of which should be enhanced. This view is reflected in the support given by all Member States to the draft resolution on transparency in the field of armaments, which will be submitted to the First Committee. It welcomes the adoption of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts and the positive evaluation of the Register during its first five years of existence. The Union calls on all States to submit a return — even a "nil" return — to the Register on a regular basis so that its value as a regional and subregional confidence-building measure can be further enhanced. At present, in addition to information on the import and export of arms, States are asked to provide information on military holdings and procurement through national production. Such information is in addition to the information on exports and imports of arms covered by the categories of the Register. In this connection, the Union regrets that the Group of Experts was unable at its last meeting to agree on a specific format applicable to military holdings and procurement through national production.

The European Union is also convinced of the importance of the information system set up at the United Nations concerning objective information on military issues, including the transparency of military expenditure, and urges all States to take part in it. For their part, the States members of the Union have drawn up a joint response to the relevant resolution of the General Assembly in order to give a clear profile to their joint commitment to this exercise.

Responsibility with regard to transfers of conventional weapons is a key factor in ensuring international security. At its recent meeting at Amsterdam the European Council emphasized the fundamental importance that the Union attaches to consultation at international level to ensure effective control of arms exports. The adoption in 1996 by the United Nations Disarmament Commission of guidelines for international arms transfers is evidence of the widespread interest in this fundamental issue, which appeared once again on the Commission's agenda this year. In this context, the consolidation of peace in the phase immediately following an armed conflict requires broader cooperation between the international community and the countries directly concerned in the implementation of practical disarmament measures.

The accumulation and the excessive and destabilizing transfers of small arms and light weapons are at the root of increasing international concern. They represent the sole or primary tools of violence in our time, employed as they are for the most part in internal conflicts. The Union welcomes the recent report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and looks for a vigorous follow-up to its recommendations. Some of those recommendations deal with illicit trafficking in small arms. In June 1997, the

Union adopted a programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. The programme, which involves a series of measures to promote cooperation between member States and the aid provided by the European Union to third countries in this field, is aimed at the illicit trafficking in all types of conventional weapons, and in portable weapons in particular.

In the field of so-called conventional weapons there has been in recent years an extraordinary momentum concerning the urgent matter of the tragic consequences of the spread and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In October of last year the Union adopted a joint action on anti-personnel landmines, in which it expressed its determination to achieve the objective of totally eliminating anti-personnel landmines and to work actively for the conclusion, as soon as possible, of an effective international agreement to ban such weapons worldwide. Accordingly, the 15 member States of the Union supported United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. The European Union's joint action also involves a commitment by Union member States to observe a joint moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel landmines, whatever their destination, and a substantial financial contribution by the Union to the international effort to clear mines and provide aid to the victims of mines. Since the joint action was adopted, the Union has vigorously continued its efforts to achieve its objective, namely, the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Accordingly, the Union has undertaken to explore all possible ways of helping to bring about a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. It welcomes the work that has been done following the International Strategy Conference at Ottawa, notably at the seminars in Vienna and Bonn and at the Brussels Conference, as it does the adoption at Oslo of a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines on 18 September 1997.

The European Union believes that it would be desirable for all States to endorse the objective of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines, which is also the objective of the future Ottawa convention. It is determined to promote its objectives actively in all the appropriate international forums, including the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament, regional organizations and the review conferences of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. To this end, the Union will continue its efforts at the Conference on Disarmament, including those towards the early establishment of a special committee on anti-personnel landmines. In the view of the European Union, the work that will be done following the Ottawa Conference in the Conference on Disarmament and all the other forums should make an effective contribution to the total banning of anti-personnel landmines throughout the world.

In June 1996, the Union welcomed the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to admit new members, some of which are member States of the Union. It also welcomes the fact that, in its resolution 51/47 A, the General Assembly called on the Conference on Disarmament to consider the admission of other applicants before the start of the General Assembly's fifty-second session. During the second stage of last year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, a special coordinator on enlargement was appointed and his report submitted to the Conference on 28 August 1997. The Union hopes that the Conference will soon be able to reach a consensus for resolving this problem and would draw attention here to the fact that five member States of the Union and four associated countries have applied for admission.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution stating that a fourth special session on disarmament could be convened in 1999, subject to a consensus being reached on its objectives and agenda. It was also stated that a preparatory committee for the session could be convened this year, subject in this case to the conclusions of the spring session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. At that session, the European Union reminded the Commission of some basic principles to which it is committed. It attaches importance, in particular, to the special session's agenda being comprehensive and balanced, with items concerning conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction alike.

Last year, the European Union made a number of contributions to debates on specific issues. To ensure that these debates have maximum effect, it would ask all States to play an active and constructive part in them this year.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's proposals on reform. It hopes that the United Nations will continue fully to play its role of sustaining and backing up the efforts of the Member States and that the role of Geneva as a centre for negotiation and analysis will be confirmed.

We are required this year to resume our discussions on rationalizing the work of the First Committee and reforming its agenda. The European Union intends to make

a substantial contribution to that debate so as to ensure that the efforts made in this forum are pursued productively.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We are convinced that, given your personal experience and skills, as well as your representation of a region that has clearly demonstrated its commitment to disarmament, you will guide our work in an exemplary fashion.

We are living in a historic moment. Global confrontations have come to an end and ethical values have been reasserted; democracy is practised almost everywhere throughout the world; new economic opportunities have opened up; and integration is the dominant trend. This climate provides unprecedented opportunities in the areas of disarmament and security that must be exploited if we are to achieve effective agreements at the regional and global levels.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. I believe that the United Nations must record as a major achievement the almost universal recognition that this instrument has achieved. We would also express our gratitude to those countries and regions that were pioneers in this area. Argentina welcomes the progress made in the preparations for the review conference to be held in the year 2000 and will continue to contribute to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

Among the significant achievements made this year, we must highlight the reaffirmation of the international commitment against weapons of mass destruction and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention with an effective verification mechanism, the first agreement of its kind. I believe that this Assembly should invite all Governments to accede to or ratify that Convention as soon as possible.

On the other hand, because they are easy to manufacture, biological weapons represent a particular threat to peace and security. Argentina believes that efforts should be stepped up to give the Biological Weapons Convention an effective verification mechanism. Thus, the decision of the Fourth Review Conference for that Convention is an important step in the right direction.

We must also point out the positive trend towards accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the steps taken by the Preparatory Committee to implement this agreement. In this regard, I am pleased to report that the Government of Argentina has initiated steps for parliamentary ratification. Another important challenge is the undertaking of negotiations to adopt a convention banning the manufacture of fissile material. We regret the fact that, despite the decision taken in 1995, the work of the ad hoc committee has yet to begin.

Despite the positive balance in collective efforts in the field of disarmament and security, there still persists a disturbing risk of nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula. Argentina is party to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO); it has contributed to maintaining the administrative structure of that body and has made scientific cooperation available.

At a time when new kinds of conflicts are appearing in which non-State bodies are filling new voids, the international arms trade is particularly disturbing. We appreciate the purpose and the contribution of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We have expressed our satisfaction at the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and the assessment of the Register's functioning. We need to consider other steps to increase transparency in the transfer of arms. This is an area in which all countries, including the smallest, can make an extremely important contribution. For these reasons, we will support the draft resolution to be presented to the Committee.

All States must also keep in mind the agreement to ban anti-personnel mines reached in Oslo. Allow me to highlight the initial support this issue received from the Latin American and Caribbean Group. The Rio Group countries are committed to working towards converting the region into the world's first to be free of anti-personnel mines. For its part, in 1995 Argentina declared a five-year moratorium on the export, sale or transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region free from the risk of arms races, as a result of the foreign policies of democratic Governments which, with determination and consistency, have been establishing a solid basis for confidence and mutual cooperation. The United States, which has decided to make the sale of weapons to the region more flexible, will find a field where political maturity, dialogue and integration are the best security against the reappearance of negative rhetoric, which was abandoned some time ago. Argentina is satisfied with the early efforts to remove the tension of the past, efforts which have been central to our foreign policy in recent

years. Today, dialogue continues in a constructive climate, and our armed forces conduct joint military exercises with their counterparts in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. These developments are a faithful expression of the confidence achieved in the region.

This year Latin America and the Caribbean are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This celebration marks the success of our efforts to establish the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world.

Argentina firmly believes in the need to consolidate the objectives of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we urge all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to continue to make progress along the trail blazed by Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok. Argentina will co-sponsor and endorse the draft resolution to be submitted on nuclear-weapon-free zones in the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

The meetings in Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile of Organization of American States (OAS) experts on measures to promote confidence and security mechanisms, were a landmark, in that they gave proof of the will to strengthen the regional organization in this sensitive area. We hope to continue to make progress along these lines in the upcoming meeting to be held in San Salvador in 1998.

At the same time, I would stress that we are actively considering conventional disarmament proposals put forward by Mexico, such as a draft convention to ban the illicit manufacture of and traffic in firearms, munitions, explosives and related material.

I said at the outset that the international climate was favourable to accelerating commitments to promote disarmament and security. This opportunity must not be missed. States are pursuing political and social economic objectives, and fortunately appear to be gaining ground. Nevertheless, with the post-cold-war international system only just beginning to take shape it is not yet possible to see whether the future will continue to be free of conflict.

Finally, we support the series of measures proposed by the Secretary-General in the field of disarmament. In this regard, we must be cautious in two areas. First, administrative reorganization must not mean changes in the priorities or the responsibilities of the United Nations. Secondly, we must be able to include all countries in our efforts for peace and security. These issues must not be dealt with in the interests of a few. Therefore, both in administrative reorganization and in the substance, we must recognize the importance which the smallest countries have gained today, and we must give them an opportunity to participate fully.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I would like also to state that we are confident that with your expertise and knowledge you will lead the deliberations of this Committee in such a manner that we can achieve the results we all seek. This will enhance the international community's efforts in pursuit of disarmament. Rest assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours to achieve this goal. I would like also to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, for his wise chairmanship of the Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The First Committee convenes this year amid some international and regional developments related to the achievement of international disarmament. These developments include, most notably, the success of the Oslo negotiations on an international ban on landmines, as well as the endorsement by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, the efforts to bring fully into force the Treaty of Bangkok, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by virtue of the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba, and the unanimous Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, which stated that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

This is in addition to the strengthening of the NPT safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Moreover, there have been other positive developments, such as the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the strengthening of the prohibition against biological weapons, and the adoption of amended Protocol II and of Protocol IV of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

The Sudan believes there are many tasks remaining for the international community in the field of nuclear disarmament, especially as regards the upcoming nuclear-disarmament agenda. In this regard, the Sudanese delegation stresses the necessity of serious negotiations on comprehensive nuclear disarmament, in conformity with the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978.

We are all agreed that with the end of the cold war there is no further justification for nuclear arsenals or for systems of international security based on competing military alliances or on nuclear deterrence. Yet those who follow the developments of the international scene, which have been marked by instability, will undoubtedly note with regret the nuclear-weapon States' attempts to justify continued reliance on the nuclear-deterrence theory. These States continue to maintain many nuclear weapons under the pretext of nuclear security.

The Sudanese delegation would like, in this connection, to reiterate its support for the proposal of the non-aligned countries that are members of the Conference on Disarmament. This proposal called on the Conference to establish on a priority basis an ad hoc committee to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame. This programme would include a nuclear-weapons convention.

A universal and legally binding multilateral agreement should be concluded committing all States to eliminate all nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Sudanese delegation endorses the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We also very much look forward to the forthcoming second session of the Preparatory Commission for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons within the framework of the efforts to consolidate the Treaty's review process in order to guarantee the full implementation of the objectives set forth in the Treaty's preamble, of the other obligations under the Treaty, and of the commitments undertaken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. This is particularly important since the NPT represents the main instrument for stopping vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation.

The international community should strive to achieve an equitable balance between the obligations and the responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States in order to completely eliminate these weapons. In this context, we would like to emphasize the need for universal adherence to the NPT and for the signing of legally binding conventions to secure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as to ban fissile materials and to end restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes, which the developing countries need.

The Sudan supports and contributes to the international and regional efforts aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines. In this regard, we participated in the first conference on anti-personnel landmines in Africa, organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and hosted by the Government of South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997. The Sudan has also joined the African consensus on the African plan of action to clear landmines, which was adopted by the conference. Concomitantly, the Sudan participated in the international conference on anti-personnel landmines in Brussels from 24 to 27 June 1997. In addition, the Sudan joined the declaration of Brussels, which called for an international, comprehensive treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines under the umbrella of the United Nations. In line with the declaration of Brussels, the Sudan participated in the negotiations of the Oslo conference for the elaboration of a final treaty on the banning of anti-personnel landmines. In this context, the Sudan will strive to sign the treaty in Ottawa in December this year.

Being one of the countries that is affected by the danger of anti-personnel landmines, the Sudan has been very keen on participating in all international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. Preliminary estimates indicate more than 2 million of these deadly devices in Sudan. Such estimates may even be surpassed. They cover large areas in the south and the east of the country. They have been planted by the insurgency movement. These mines have led to the deterioration of the environment and have impeded the delivery of relief assistance and sustainable development. They have also thwarted the voluntary repatriation of 2 million refugees and displaced persons to their homes and shelters, where they could have returned to their normal lives.

With a view to enlightening public opinion in our country and soliciting national and international help in dealing with our landmine problem, the Government of the Sudan has organized several seminars and symposia to establish a national plan to clear landmines. The Sudan is looking forward to the assistance of the international community to support these efforts in order to improve

Sudan's mine-clearance capacity, and also to help care for and rehabilitate the victims. One of the articles of the Khartoum agreement, signed between the Government and the Southern factions on 21 April 1997, called for the consolidation of national efforts to clear land mines and to achieve a comprehensive ban and to extend assistance to victims. The Sudan is looking forward to the cooperation of the international community in the form of technical and material assistance and the transfer of advanced technology in order to enable it to deal with the problem of anti-personnel landmines. This would guarantee development, the return of stability and security, the preservation of the environment and the voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons.

As one of the African countries adversely affected by war owing to the flow of arms to insurgency and subversive movements, the Sudan attaches special importance to the proliferation of conventional weapons. While it supports the principle of limiting trafficking in conventional arms and their use in violating human rights, repressing public opinion, destabilizing peace and security, escalating regional conflicts or supporting terrorism, the Sudan strongly affirms its right to use conventional weapons to defend its borders and its unity. This right is guaranteed us by international law and international covenants and norms. In this connection, we call upon other States to comply with what they have called for and particularly to stop providing insurgency and subversive movements with conventional weapons.

The Secretary-General made specific mention in his report to the General Assembly this year of the intense competition to export these weapons to conflict areas, thereby exacerbating the intensity and duration of those conflicts. The peaceful resolution by States of regional disputes is essential for the creation of conditions that would enable States to divert their resources from armaments to economic growth and development. Moreover, regional disarmament initiatives should take into consideration the special characteristics of each region and enhance the security of every State of the region concerned.

Like the other members of the international community, the Sudan believes that transparency in armaments is a means of enhancing international peace and security. The delegation of the Sudan in this connection reaffirms its support for the response forwarded by the States members of the League of Arab States to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the issue of transparency in armaments, given the fact that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, in its current form, lacks transparency. Its scope should be expanded to include information on weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, in addition to the inclusion of advanced light technology with military applications.

The Register takes into account the situation in the Middle East, where Israel continues its occupation of Arab land, while it possesses the most lethal categories of sophisticated weapons and continues to be the only State in the region that is not yet party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Israel also persists in defying repeated appeals launched by the international community to accede to the Treaty and to place its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the full cooperation of the delegation of the Sudan and its readiness to participate in the discussion of all the items on agenda of the First Committee with a view to reaching acceptable solutions in connection with all of them.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation extends to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident of your ability to steer the work of this Committee to a fruitful outcome, to which end my delegation pledges its full cooperation with you and with members of the Bureau.

Allow me to make some general remarks at this stage of our deliberations. My delegation hopes that the deliberations of the Committee at its current session will contribute towards advancing further the disarmament process by drawing from the lessons of the past. This certainly could be realized if Member States are prepared to take a more constructive approach than in the past. Frankly, if we want to make real progress, we must be prepared to discard old and outmoded security concepts, paradigms and mindsets, notably the cold-war doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which continues to underpin the defence strategies of the nuclear-weapon States.

Such a doctrine, whatever its questionable merits during the cold war, is now neither credible nor consistent with the concept of a clearly non-winnable nuclear war. It will only spur the ceaseless quest for superiority of these weapons and hence will stand in the way of real disarmament. Only when the nuclear- weapon States are prepared to move out of their cold-war mentality and take serious measures towards the reduction and final elimination of their nuclear arsenals will there be real

prospects of a world without nuclear weapons and of getting the so-called threshold nuclear States to abandon their own nuclear ambitions.

From the perspective of the non-nuclear-weapon States, therefore, nuclear disarmament must remain a high priority on the international agenda. We acknowledge the importance of the ongoing bilateral and unilateral arrangements aimed at reducing the current nuclear-weapon stockpiles undertaken by the United States and the Russian Federation through the START process. However, we are mindful that even with the implementation of START II, which has yet to be ratified by Russia, we would still be far from the goal of a world completely free of nuclear weapons. Given that existing global stocks of nuclear arsenals number over 30,000, with the equivalent explosive force of 200,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs, it is imperative that the international community press on, with unremitting vigour, with the global campaign for a nuclear-weapon-free world. In the meantime, we urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II and that efforts be made by the parties concerned to commence negotiations on START III without undue delay.

We recall the almost euphoric adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996. It was indeed an important event. Despite its obvious flaws and deficiencies, it was welcomed by the international community, which was anxious for some tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament. The Treaty clearly lacks an explicit commitment to the definitive end of the nuclear-arms race. Despite its name, the Treaty is far from comprehensive, as it allows the nuclear-weapon States to use advanced technology to modernize and upgrade their nuclear-weapon systems through laboratory test explosions.

This fear has now been confirmed. Less than a year after the adoption of the CTBT, amid an increasing number of its signatories, one nuclear-weapon State has recently announced plans to conduct a series of "subcritical" underground nuclear tests as part of the so-called stockpile stewardship and management programme to maintain and expand its nuclear-weapon capabilities well into the twenty-first century. Such tests are taking place despite the concerns expressed by the international community. No doubt this programme will be emulated by the other nuclear Powers, equally anxious to upgrade their own nuclear arsenals, thereby undermining efforts to encourage other States to sign the CTBT and those who have done so to ratify it. Continuing such tests is a sure way of delaying rather than expediting the entry into force of the Treaty.

While the international community is encouraged by the fact that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is reaching universality, the threshold States still remain outside of it, with few prospects of their joining in the foreseeable future. Nor have serious efforts been made to fully realize its main objectives, in particular, the provisions of article VI of that Treaty. Clearly much more needs to be done, and we call on all NPT States parties, in particular the nuclear- weapon States, to live up to their Treaty obligations while refraining from pursuing security policies which could undermine the letter and spirit of the Treaty.

The first meeting, in April this year, of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference to be held in the year 2000 provided the opportunity to consider further steps that could be taken to fulfil NPT obligations, particularly in respect of article VI of the Treaty. Despite some of the positive developments that have taken place in the nuclear disarmament area in recent years, little real progress has been made in the efforts towards the agreed goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is essential that future sessions of the Preparatory Committee make an accurate and objective assessment of compliance with NPT obligations. Only through such an objective analysis will we be able to evaluate the role of the NPT in the overall context of the nuclear disarmament process and to take the necessary measures to overcome its deficiencies. To that end, my delegation calls for a cooperative and constructive attitude on the part of all States parties to the NPT, notably the nuclear-weapon States, in future sessions of the Preparatory Committee so as to maximize the usefulness of the process.

Equally disappointing is the failure of the Conference on Disarmament even to agree on the programme of work for its 1997 session, let alone make any progress in the negotiations. Clearly, the continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is a reflection of the differing positions between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States on both approaches to and substantive aspects of the work of the Conference; this has certainly raised questions about the future role and effectiveness of that body. The continued paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament will not only undermine the usefulness and relevance of that single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament but will also increase the risks of it being sidelined, as recent events have proved. Clearly, the Conference on Disarmament will have to reexamine and improve its

working methods and decision-making process if it wants to be taken seriously by the international community.

Almost two years ago, the International Court of Justice, in a historic Advisory Opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, unanimously concluded that States parties to the NPT have the obligation not only to begin but also to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. This was a positive and important contribution by the Court towards realizing the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. At its last session the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the First Committee, adopted resolution 51/45 M by a significant majority which, *inter alia*, underscored the Court's ruling on the obligation to pursue these negotiations in good faith, and called for the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention. In the light of the continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, the sponsors of that resolution will renew their call during this session of the General Assembly.

We are gratified to see the increasing trend towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. Moves to establish such zones are important regional initiatives towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. To date, more than half of the world is covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones, thanks to the Antarctic Treaty as well as the Treaties of Rarotonga, Tlatelolco, Bangkok and Pelindaba. My delegation strongly supports this building-block approach to nuclear disarmament, and urges that similar efforts be made in other regions of the world so as to provide the necessary impetus towards realizing the goals of nuclear disarmament.

With its entry into force on 27 March 1997, the Treaty of Bangkok, signed in December 1995, which established the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, has made an important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament and reflects the genuine commitment of the Southeast Asian States to disarmament goals. We look forward to the accession of the nuclear Powers to the Protocol of the Bangkok Treaty at an early date.

My delegation welcomes the recent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Committed as we are to that Convention, preparations are underway for its ratification by Malaysia in the near future. We are also happy to note the recent progress made in the work of the ad hoc group of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, particularly as it pertains to the legally binding verification protocol of the Convention.

My delegation has consistently maintained its support for the international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. Given their devastating effects on innocent civilian populations, mostly women and children among them, and other related security and socio-economic problems, Malaysia has joined other States in calling for serious rethinking of existing military doctrines that legitimize the use of these horrific weapons. We participated in the recent Oslo conference to negotiate the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and we look forward to signing it in Ottawa at the end of this year. We strongly urge the major military Powers that have decided to stay out of the Convention to rethink their position and join the rest of the international community in signing the Convention so as to ensure its universality. They should in fact be taking the lead on this issue.

We must continue to keep our focus on the disarmament agenda and to exert every effort to benefit from the peace dividend that accrued following the end of the cold war. We should guard ourselves against sliding into a false sense of security and complacency following the disarmament breakthroughs of recent years, important though they may be. We should remind ourselves that the current window of opportunity for further major breakthroughs in disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, may well be a narrow one, and that another opportunity might not present itself again in our lifetime. We should take advantage of the current stability in the international political system to extricate ourselves from the nuclear dilemma. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to take advantage of this rare historic opportunity so as to pave the way for the realization of the vision of a nuclear-free world, perhaps in the not too distant future.

In this regard, therefore, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to revitalize the work of the united Nations in the disarmament field. We welcome his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. However, we would urge that the new department give priority attention to nuclear disarmament, even as it grapples with other equally pressing aspects of disarmament. My delegation believes that a revamped and

revitalized Secretariat Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation will have a vital role to play in servicing the intergovernmental disarmament process and in keeping the issue of disarmament at the centre of United Nations concerns.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to recognize and commend the supportive catalytic role of civil society, as represented by the relevant non-governmental organizations, in the disarmament process. We believe that the intergovernmental process can derive tremendous benefit from closer interaction and cooperation with such organizations.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you warmly on behalf of my delegation on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We pledge all the cooperation you will need to carry out your important mandate. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election.

Let me also thank the former Chairman, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations, for his skilful guidance of the work of the Committee at the last session.

Ecuador is a member of the Rio Group, and its position will be outlined in this debate by the coordinator of that group, the representative of Paraguay. I should, however, like to make a few additional comments.

Despite the progress achieved of late in the field of disarmament, to which the Secretary-General has referred in paragraph 123 of his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" [A/51/950], the existence of nuclear weapons continues to pose a grave threat to mankind. In fact, the unjustified accumulation and development of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continues, and the unbridled weapons trade continues to threaten the security and stability of vast regions of the world.

The International Court of Justice arrived at the unanimous conclusion that it was the obligation of all States to undertake in good faith and to conclude negotiations with a view to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. As a result, bilateral and multilateral negotiations to eliminate the massive nuclear-arms arsenals are a matter of top priority in order to comply with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

On the basis of the various statements made by the Rio Group, Ecuador reiterates its firm conviction that it is necessary to insist on the validity of those commitments. Hence, the signing and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will support the general process of disarmament and contribute to promoting trust among all States, both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, thus avoiding the incalculable damage that might be caused by the existence of those arsenals.

This unswerving position of Ecuador has led it to endorse the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Therefore, it supports the negotiations on a phased programme for nuclear disarmament and for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a give time-frame. That plan would include three stages. The first step would be a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement that would commit all States to achieving the objective of totally eliminating nuclear weapons. Secondly, an agreement would be reached on the future necessary measures for this phased programme with timetables for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. And, finally, we should arrive at a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator on this issue and other opinions on the scope of the treaty. It is true that these proposals did not find consensus in the Conference on Disarmament, but it is necessary to insist on them in order to create international awareness.

The dissemination of technology and material for the manufacturing of nuclear weapons and the increased interest in procuring biological and chemical weapons, as well as the corresponding vector systems, continue to be a growing threat. However, we must welcome the entry into force of a new legal instrument, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). The establishment of an Organization entrusted with the effective implementation of the complex verification mechanism established in the Convention is an essential step contributing to the process of disarmament. On 6 May 1997 Ecuador informed that Organization that in our country there are no installations for the manufacturing of chemical weapons or of any similar kind of weapon.

Equally, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), in force since 1975, has gained particular impetus

from the consideration of the measures and mechanisms appropriate for strengthening it. I am pleased to recognize that the parties to that Convention are negotiating a protocol to that instrument. We hope that a decision will soon be taken on establishing institutional verification mechanisms.

Ecuador believes it necessary to reiterate the urgency of reaching an agreement on effective international arrangements to provide safeguards for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States need to reach a common formula that could be included in an international and legally binding instrument. My delegation would like to emphasize in particular Security Council resolution 984 (1995), in which the Council recognized:

> "the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to receive assurances that the Security Council, and above all its nuclear-weapon State permanent members, will act immediately in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, in the event that such States are the victim of an act of, or object of a threat of, aggression in which nuclear weapons are used". [Security Council resolution 984 (1995), para. 2]

This has preserved and duly protected the right of legitimate defence, both individual and collective, provided for in Article 51 of the Charter — a right that my country believes is one of the pillars underlying international coexistence and a guarantee for the respect of the territorial integrity of States.

The General Assembly has adopted various resolutions on measures to halt the transfer and illicit use of conventional weapons. Ecuador attaches particular importance to this issue and has complied with its obligation to provide information to the Register of Conventional Arms. It feels that regional disarmament must be accompanied by measures and initiatives for conventional disarmament on a global scale, taking into account the fact that the major Powers have more than 75 per cent of the conventional military power in the world. Along the same lines, Ecuador expresses its concern at the imbalance of weapons among States within a single region. Such imbalances, far from providing greater security to those who have more weapons, ultimately increase insecurity in the entire region by encouraging an unbridled arms race. That situation, in which the small countries with limited military means are at the greatest disadvantage, can be resolved only through regional disarmament agreements, because these imbalances cause regional instability and insecurity.

In order to promote confidence measures at the regional and subregional levels, I wish to report that on 18 July 1997, the President of Ecuador, Mr. Fabián Alarcón, sent to former President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, a reply from the Ecuadorian Government supporting the initiative that the countries of the Latin American region should declare a two-year moratorium on the purchase of high-technology weapons from the United States, given the decision of that country to lift the ban on providing weapons to Latin America.

This position clearly shows the concern of Ecuador over the dangers of an arms race, which could be unleashed despite the advances of the democratization process in the region. This situation could lead to a massive diversion of the resources that are so necessary for the socio-economic development of our countries. The ultimate objective of all of these efforts must be the integration of the region into a peaceful and non-violent world order. Humankind must not be taken hostage by the technological arms race. The historical stance of Ecuador, a peace-loving country, has led it to reaffirm that the general and complete disarmament process, under effective international control, must move forward with firm steps, responding to the legal and moral conscience of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are pioneers in this area, as evidenced by the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

At the most recent General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ecuador supported a resolution in which the American continent was declared a zone free of anti-personnel mines. We believe that the international community must continue its efforts to reach agreement on a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of this class of weapon. At the Diplomatic Conference in Oslo which adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the delegation of Ecuador made the following statement:

> "Ecuador, in accordance with the foreign policy principles that are enshrined in its Constitution, supports the Convention because it believes that it will strengthen and perfect the principles of international humanitarian law, conceived as the standards of *jus cogens*. It also declares that the total prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-

personnel mines must be accompanied by policies of strict compliance with disarmament Conventions, in particular in relation to the control of strategic arms".

My country believes that transparency measures for compliance with the Convention must be strictly applied. In particular, I wish to highlight the importance of the provisions of paragraph 1 of article 1, under which

"Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances:

"(b) To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines".

Similarly, we support strengthening the trust fund for the removal of mines, and hold that the countries that produce and export these devices have the greatest responsibility in this respect. We also consider that greater attention should be given to a data bank to provide information about the danger of mines and the means for their removal.

As for the function of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, Ecuador feels that the progress achieved in this area must be used for the benefit of all of humankind so as to promote the sustainable economic and social development of all States and to safeguard international security. We must also promote international cooperation in the use of science and technology for peaceful purposes.

The Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cartagena de Indias in October 1995, drew attention to the need to focus more on economic development issues and on the enormous sums spent by the major Powers on weapons, primarily nuclear weapons. Ecuador therefore believes that it is necessary to urge the international community again to devote to economic and social development part of the resources released as a result of the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements, so as to reduce the growing disparity between developed and developing countries. We need to ensure the full implementation of the recommendations for action approved at that international conference on the relationship between disarmament and development.

The philosophy behind this appeal is that peace and security will be effectively supported when the greatest percentage of resources released through disarmament policies can be used to promote the socio-economic development of all. There is a close relationship between peace, collective security, overall development and international law. These are all essential elements to ensure a stable international order. No one can feel safe until dialogue and negotiation replace, once and for all, confrontation and war, which impede the possibility of development for peoples and endanger their stability and democracy.

Ecuador believes that it is important that the fourth session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament be held, if possible, in 1999. It hopes that the agenda will deal exhaustively with issues of conventional disarmament. In this matter, my delegation supports the position expressed on various occasions by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Ecuador supports the important work being carried out by the Conference on Disarmament, as the only multilateral negotiating body. Paragraph 14 of the report of the Conference, contained in document A/52/27, records that since 1982 requests for membership have been received from various countries, including Ecuador. Our interest in being included in the Conference with full rights is based on the genuinely and resolutely peaceful calling of my country, and on the fact that our contribution to debates and in forums is and will continue to be constant and active. We therefore believe that a prompt solution is required with regard to an increase in the number of members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Chairman: I would like to remind members that in accordance with the Committee's decision, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.